



Presentation Skills

About this Topic: Presentation Skills



Topic Mentor

Nick Morgan

Nick Morgan is a communications expert who has worked as a speechwriter, a public relations director, and a communications professor. Through his company Public Words, he coaches executives and runs seminars on a range of communication issues. He has been editor of *Harvard Management Communication Letter*, has written hundreds of articles, and is the author of *Working the Room: How to Motivate People to Action Through Audience-Centered Speaking* (HBS Press).

Topic Source Notes

Learn

Lin Kroeger. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Successful Business Presentations*. New York: Alpha Books, 1997.

George L. Morrissey, Thomas Sechrest, and Wendy B. Warman. *Loud and Clear: How to Prepare and Deliver Effective Business and Technical Presentations*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1997.

Steps

George L. Morrissey, Thomas Sechrest, and Wendy B. Warman. *Loud and Clear: How to Prepare and Deliver Effective Business and Technical Presentations*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1997.

Harvard Business School Publishing. *Business Communication*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2003.

What Would You Do?

What would you do?

Barbara watched the videotape of her speech and shook her head in frustration. How could her presentation have been so dull? She had studied her audience, researched her subject, and worked for hours to develop a talk that was clear and concise. As she was watching the videotape, she noticed some trouble spots: Her head was buried in her notes, the audience seemed lost, and she came off as—well, not particularly charismatic. She wondered how she could inject her own witty and outgoing personality into a presentation so she could better engage her audience.

What would you do?

In hindsight, Barbara realized that it was not enough to have strong content. She needed to give an award-winning performance to capture the audience's attention. For starters, she could have made more eye contact with the audience, used a conversational tone, and referred to her notes only when she needed to. Next, she could have prepared a few visuals to illustrate the key points of her talk. Visuals would have helped the audience stay focused. Finally, she could have incorporated relevant stories or examples that supported her material, yet didn't distract from her overall message.

In this topic, you'll learn how to prepare, practice, and present information to achieve the results you want.

Have you ever felt disappointed after giving a carefully planned presentation? What went wrong? What could you have done to improve the audience's response?

Topic Objectives

This topic contains relevant information on how to:

- Prepare an effective presentation customized for your audience and setting
- Deliver an effective presentation that produces action
- Address questions and keep people focused during your presentation

The purpose of presentations



Presentations are a powerful way to communicate your message to a group. They are an opportunity to gather your audience together to engage in a two-way dialogue. Managers use presentations to:

- Persuade the audience to take a particular course of action
- Convey something you want the audience to know
- Tailor information to meet the needs of a particular audience
- Provide a forum for discussion of controversial or challenging ideas
- Find out how people are reacting to a situation or an idea
- Gain commitment and alignment
- Engage people in generating solutions to problems

Different types of presentations

“ We rule the world by our words. ”
–Napoleon Bonaparte

There are many different types of presentations that meet specific needs. These are some examples:

- **Sales:** Outlines the benefits, features, and reasons to buy a product or service
- **Persuasion:** Provides the reasons or support to pursue a particular idea or path
- **Status report:** Details the progress of a project, a task force, or product sales
- **Product demonstration:** Shows how something works
- **Business plan or strategy:** Sketches out what an organization plans to do next, or articulates the company's goals

Sharing detailed information is not a good use of a presentation. Audiences will not remember detail. You can use a presentation to inform an audience about a major change or initiative, but use written forms of communication for the detail. Thus, your purpose drives the type of presentation you choose.

Key Idea: Define your objective

Key Idea

The objective of your presentation is the outcome that you want—discussion, buy-in, feedback, persuasion, or a sale. It drives the development of your presentation. Begin by asking yourself these questions: "What is the purpose of this presentation?" and "What do I want my audience to do as a result?"

More specifically:

- Do I want to inform, persuade, or sell?
- Do I want the audience to understand, learn, or take action? Note the difference between presenting a budget so your audience understands it and presenting a budget so your audience votes on it.
- Do I want commitment from the audience?

Include examples and details that help you achieve your objective. Omit anything extraneous, distracting, or interfering.

Your objective also helps you determine the following:

- Whether to give the presentation at all
- Whether to give it to this particular audience under these particular circumstances
- What to say and how to say it
- What the follow-up needs to be
- Possible objections

Your objective drives how you develop your presentation. What are the essential questions you should ask yourself? How can you make sure you are headed in the right direction?

Key Idea: Know your audience

Key Idea

A presentation is an interactive dialogue between you and your audience. The better you understand your listeners, the more you can customize your presentation. Make sure that you can answer these questions:

- Is the subject controversial, familiar, or new—or a combination to this audience?
- Who are they and what is their relationship to your topic?
- How well informed are they about the subject? What do they need to know about it?
- What do they expect from the event? From your presentation?
- Are they accustomed to a certain type of presentation?
- What do they know about you? What more do they need to know? How do they feel about you?
- Why are they present? Are they there by choice or by requirement?
- Are they likely to be enthusiastic? Polite? Apathetic? Hostile?
- Are there any other obstacles, history, or expectations that you need to take into account?

Maximize the impact of your presentation by learning more about your audience. Make sure you have answers to these vital questions.

Understand your presentation's context

You are not presenting in a vacuum. The context of your presentation plays a major role in how it will be received. You need to be aware of the following issues:

- Is the situation formal or informal?
- When you present, will the audience have just finished eating, drinking, working, or doing something active? Will they be tired or alert? When was the last break?
- Who will speak before you? Who comes after you? How might this affect audience reaction?
- Are you the first or last speaker of the program? The day? The morning or afternoon?
- Are you expected to take questions or leave copies of your presentation?
- How much time do you have for the presentation? Can your message be delivered in that time?
- Will the physical setting of the presentation require you to adapt your talk?
- What control do you have over the physical environment?

Stages of preparation



Many of us have experienced the paralysis of knowing what we want to accomplish, but having trouble putting down the actual words and ideas. Usually, the easiest way to proceed is to divide the work into stages.

- **Stage 1:** Define your key message. What do you want people to remember and what action you want them to take? This message flows directly from your objective. You can have a number of supporting arguments, ideas, and facts, but only one key message.
- **Stage 2:** Next, identify the arguments that support your message. Avoid excessive detail but be sure to talk about more than just the facts. It is important to identify and address the emotional underpinnings of your message. *Why* should the audience care about it?
- **Stage 3:** Finally, identify when it is important to get audience participation, reactions, agreement, or buy-in.

Review and refine your ideas

“ Everything becomes a little different as soon as it is spoken out loud. ”
–Hermann Hesse

After you have generated your initial set of ideas on content, you are ready to review and refine them. Consider the following:

- Is the key message you have selected really the most critical? Does it support the objectives of the presentation?
- Are the arguments you have marshaled understandable to all levels of your audience?
- Will your content convince the audience to agree with you?
- Are logical connections explicit?
- What arguments need to be developed?
- What contrary arguments do you need to neutralize?

Then, ask yourself what else you can do or say that may help to persuade your audience. Effective persuaders use arguments that combine logic and emotion to convince their audience. Your persuasiveness is largely a product of your enthusiasm, credibility, and personal belief in the subject.

Remember: Include only those details that will persuade. If you are not sure about the impact of a point, leave it out.

Leadership Insight: 5-plus-1 slide strategy

Today I think we have a love/hate relationship with PowerPoint. We love to use it when we are presenting; we hate it when we have to view it, especially if it's misused. When you think about it, it has been around for like 15 years. You'd think we'd have gotten better at using it. It reminds me of a story back in the early '90s. I was working for a company called Armor All Products, now part of The Clorox Company. I had just received my first edition of PowerPoint and decided to use it in a recommendation presentation I had to make to our executive committee.

The CIO gave me a new laptop that had probably a whopping 60 megabytes of memory, huge for that time, very expensive for that time. Anyway, I worked my tail off for this presentation. I probably put together 40 slides. I felt I had built a very strong case and by the time, at the end, where I got to my recommendation that no one could argue with it.

I remember getting there early to the conference room, so I could get everything set up, test it, and make sure it worked. Our CEO came and he sat at his usual chair, a couple of other company executives joined him, and I launched into the presentation.

I made it to about my second slide when he said, "Can we turn the slides off? Brad, I'm sure you have a point that you want to make, a recommendation you want to get to." And I was just kind of going "Uhhhhh" caught there in the moment. I ended up jumping to literally the last three slides because that's where the recommendation was.

We talked about those a little bit. He asked a few questions, so I jumped back earlier in the deck for a few slides that helped me answer to that and we got through it. You know, luckily he was patient with me and we had a productive enough meeting.

But I've seen the same thing happen so many times with so many people where their meeting goes off-kilter because they have too many slides, they don't get to their point soon enough. So what I recommend is taking what I call a "5-plus-1" slide strategy. Here's how you do it.

The first two slides are really the most important. On the first slide you want to be very clear about the need or opportunity that this presentation addresses and you need to do it in a very listener-centric way. You've got to make them care.

The second slide is where you position your recommendation, make it clear what the action is you need from the executive, and what results that will generate. And guess what? Collectively, those two slides, if you're not interrupted, should be at a high enough level that you could talk through it in about two minutes.

Now it may take longer; they may interrupt you or they may have questions, and that's not a bad thing. It means your slides generated discussion.

Let's talk about the next three slides: These slides should represent the key assertions and supporting facts that support your recommendation. You might have a lot of key assertions to make, but you need to pick your top three — more than that, you're going to, again, lose that audience in the meeting. They are just going to tune out on you.

And then finally there is that "plus-1" slide. What's that? It's basically an executive summary makes a great conclusion slide. Or you know sometimes you never even get to your first slide. The CEO says, "Hey, can we make this fast? I've got about two minutes." You might just lead with that slide. That may be the only slide you use.

Now I talked about a 40-slide deck. Does this mean you don't have to create all those additional slides? Well unfortunately, you probably do, you may need backup. You may need to create

those slides, but it's unlikely that you'll use all of them.

What you'll probably use is one or two of them that you will use if that executive asks a question, drills down on something, and that will give credibility to your overall concept when you are prepared to go there.

So again. "5-plus-1." And not only will you love your PowerPoint, but there's a chance your executive audience might love it too.

When it comes to PowerPoint presentations, the number of slides matters.

Brad Holst

Principal and Executive Director, Solutions Design, Mandel Communications

Brad Holst is a Principal and the Executive Director of Solutions Design for Mandel Communications, a global company that builds individual and group communication skills into winning competitive advantages for business organizations.

Brad and his team have designed and delivered strategic and tactical communication training and coaching solutions for Mandel's corporate clients in the Fortune 1,000-size range in a wide variety of industries.

He is the lead creator of the proprietary models and processes now found in Mandel's powerful suite of communication content-planning and delivery tools and techniques, including the Mandel Blueprint™ and the Mandel Story Board™.

Brad is a masterful teacher, coach, and consultant, with a rare level of business acumen based on his former leadership roles with three market-leading companies: The Walt Disney Company, The Clorox Company, and Armor All Products. Web site: www.mandel.com.

Start strong



Once you have the raw material for your presentation, you need to organize it. A well-organized presentation will make the audience's listening job as easy as possible, boosting the likelihood that you will accomplish your objective.

During the opening, use a "hook"—a comment, question, relevant story, statement, or example—to get your audience's interest and attention.

You also use the opening to do the following:

- Define the purpose of the presentation.
- Establish your credibility. Ask yourself "Which of my credentials will impress this particular audience?" and emphasize those. Or, if appropriate, have another person with authority or credibility introduce your presentation.
- Describe the importance of the topic for the audience: What's in it for them?
- Preview very briefly the main points to be covered.

Activity: Hook your audience

A good opening can captivate your audience from the very beginning.

You're delivering a speech about innovation to a cross-section of managers from your organization. Which of the following opening lines would best capture your listeners' attention at the start of your presentation?

- ☐ What do Post-it notes and Silly Putty have in common? They're innovations managers originally saw as colossal failures.

Correct choice. These specific, interesting, and well-known examples—as well as the surprising fact revealed about them—will immediately capture your audience's interest.

- ☐ Today, we're going to talk about creativity and innovation in organizations of all kinds.

Not the best choice. This opening line is too broad to hook your audience's attention.

- ☐ Any company that hopes to do well in this age of increasing competition needs to be able to innovate.

Not the best choice. Though this opening line hints at the subject of your speech, it uses dry language and therefore won't capture your listeners' attention.

Problem statement

The second part of your presentation is the need or problem statement. Here you should:

- Make it clear to the audience why it should care about your message
- Develop a clear need or problem that you and the audience will solve together
- Incorporate relevant arguments, examples, and a variety of supporting material to sustain interest without distracting from the point
- Involve the audience by asking for their suggestions and addressing their needs and issues
- Test acceptance by asking for feedback, if appropriate

Solution

The third part of your presentation, the solution, makes it clear to the audience how you think the problem should be solved or the need satisfied. Here you will:

- Help the audience visualize the benefits of the solution
- Involve the audience in developing a path forward
- Phrase your solution in terms of the audience's needs
- Make sure the urgency of your solution matches the need

Key Idea: Call to action

Key Idea

To wrap up, you need a strong call to action. Here you will want to:

- Reiterate the presentation's key message
- Integrate your opening points into your closing comments
- Recommend action
- Suggest agreement
- Obtain commitment or buy-in
- Provide closure

One of the most powerful ways to end your presentation is with a call to action. Learn how to structure a closing that is solid and persuasive.

Duration

How long should a presentation be? Often, you have to fit your presentation into a timetable developed by others.

For example, you may be granted 30 minutes to deliver a sales presentation to a buyer. In other instances, you are in control of the timing, and you can determine the optimal length for your presentation.

The following guidelines are helpful in both situations:

- Make the presentation as long as it needs to be to convey your key message clearly and completely.
- Make it only long enough to be clear and complete within the allocated time.
- It is better to make fewer points and make them well. Five, plus or minus two, is the limit of most adults for recalling important messages.
- If you do not have time to make a point clear or acceptable to your audience, save it for another presentation.
- Ending early is better than not completing the talk or rushing through the talk at the end.
- Plan on what to delete if your time is cut short.
- Allow time at the end for questions as a basic courtesy.

The power of visuals



Everyone has a preferred learning style, but most people respond better to visuals than to the spoken word alone. Consider the following research findings:

- People gain 75% of what they know visually, 13% through hearing, and 12% through smell.
- A picture is three times more effective in conveying information than words alone.
- Words and pictures together are six times more effective than words alone.

Use visual aids to help your audience:

- Maintain attention
- Remember facts
- Understand ideas, relationships, or physical layouts
- Recognize that you are moving on to a new topic

Leadership Insight: Tap the power of visuals

I was at a wedding recently, and the father of the bride gave a great toast. He started out first talking about some of the values that they had tried to instill in their daughter as she was growing up. But then he really brought it home by telling a great story, a specific example.

The values he talked about were that every day was a gift. But then when he was telling the story, he switched to talking about a time when he wasn't treating every day as a gift. He was an executive, he was traveling a lot, and at the time he was traveling a lot by helicopter.

He's coming home from this grueling business trip in this tiny helicopter, crowded full with other executives. He's not thinking about how the day is a gift. He's sort of feeling sorry himself. And then the pilot of the helicopter says, "Wow, everyone, look out the window, look down at the tarmac. There is quite a sight down there. Someone on this helicopter is a very lucky man."

And he looked out and he saw his wife and his daughter waiting for them on the tarmac. His daughter was so excited to see him, she's jumping up and down and she's wearing her full ballerina recital costume, this tiny purple tutu covered with rhinestones and these teeny little ballet shoes, and she's dancing. Sort of that's when it really came back to him, you know, every day is a gift, even the bad ones.

And so he's telling this story at the wedding and at this point everyone is kind of misting up. And then he reaches into his bag and whips out the tutu. And it's tiny. And of course he's looking at the beautiful bride sitting there and he's making the contrast. Tiny — big. And he then

pulls out the ballet slippers and hands them to the groom. And at that point everyone sort of loses it.

The reason I thought that was such an effective toast, and actually a great presentation, was that first he started talking with a specific concrete example, the story that illustrated their family values, and he did all of this without using any notes. Which was sort of amazing, and really by speaking from the heart he made really authentic connection with the audience.

But the really amazing thing was the visual aid, of course. And I think a powerful visual aid, something way beyond just a boring PowerPoint presentation, is really what makes that strong emotional connection for the audience.

A great presentation must connect emotionally with its audience.

Sarah Green

Assistant Editor, Harvard Business Review Group

Sarah Green is an Assistant Editor at Harvard Business Review. In addition to writing and editing material for HBR.org and the print magazine, she manages the Harvard Business IdeaCast, which is the top-ranked management podcast on iTunes.

Separately, she writes a weekly column for the Boston Metro newspaper; her byline has also appeared in the Boston Globe and the Boston Phoenix.

She formerly worked as a researcher for Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Ellen Goodman. Sarah received her Bachelor of Arts in English literature from Brown University.

Choose your media

You have many choices for your visuals, including overheads, computer-based slides, flip charts, and handouts. When selecting from among these media, you need to consider flexibility, cost, and appropriateness for your presentation.

Pros and Cons of Types of Media

Media	Pros	Cons
Computer-based slides	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easy to create, update, transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not always project clearly• Technology can break down, so you need to have a backup

		set of overhead slides
Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful for informal, short presentations • Provide a place for note-taking and a takeaway for later reference • Can contain supplemental background information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can become the audience's focal point, distracting them from listening to you • Can be disruptive if distributed during the presentation.
Flip charts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible • Easy to create • Encourage interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective for large groups • Difficult to transport
Overheads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible • Easy to create • Can allow light in the room for continued eye contact • Good for both formal and informal situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be awkward putting up and switching between overheads • Old technology

Six qualities of effective visuals

Not all visuals enhance a presentation. To be effective, visuals should:

- Be simple
- Use graphics, icons, and symbols to reinforce or communicate a concept

- Use key words, not full sentences
- Contain only one concept per slide or page
- Contain only three to six ideas on each flip chart sheet
- Use color where possible, but not excessively

Activity: Create an effective visual

Most people respond better to visuals than to the spoken word alone. An effective visual aid can be the key to your presentation's success. See if you know the characteristics of an effective visual.

An effective visual aid can be the key to your presentation's success. See if you know the characteristics of an effective visual.

You are trying to convince investors to build a new theater in a costly, yet ideal, location. Now you need to prepare an effective visual to support your presentation.

Select text to create your visual.



- The theater should be in the heart of downtown, as the location will drive ticket sales.
- Community theaters create centers for youth activities. A downtown location is accessible by bus.

Not the best choice. This choice uses complete sentences rather than key words, and expresses multiple key ideas.



Location drives ticket sales

Correct choice. It's most effective to limit your slide to one key idea using key words.



- Location is important;
- Seating for 2,000;
- Promotes youth activities

Not the best choice. This choice contains more than one key idea.

Select a graphic for your visual.



A simple bar graph showing the correlation between theater location and ticket sales.

Correct choice. This graphic clearly conveys information supporting your key idea.



A complex line graph showing ticket sales statistics for several different theaters, in different locations; plus a picture of a theater

Not the best choice. This photo does not communicate your key idea in a compelling way.



Two charts, one complex and one simple, plus a theater photograph

Not the best choice. This complex, multi-image graphic is difficult to read and may be distracting.

Select a color palette for your visual.

- ☐ Four bright, neon, contrasting colors

Not the best choice. This option uses too many colors and may make your visual distracting or difficult to read.

- ☐ Black and white only

Not the best choice. This visual could benefit from the use of color to create visual interest and highlight key points.

- ☐ Two shades of the same color, one light and one dark.

Correct choice. This visual contains a pleasing balance of color. The appropriate use of color creates visual interest and highlights key points.

Key Idea: Rehearse until prepared

Key Idea

When would you like to learn about the holes, the dull spots, and excessive details in your presentation? Before or after it's been delivered? Rehearse to find and repair these problems beforehand. To make the most of your rehearsal:

- Rehearse with the equipment and visuals you will actually use at the event.
- Rehearse the entire presentation each time you practice.
- Rehearse out loud and, if possible, in front of a friend or colleague. Otherwise, practice with a tape or video recorder.
- Rehearse until the presentation does not sound memorized.
- Concentrate on the subject and your desire to communicate, not on your notes.

Rehearsing is the key to delivering a successful presentation.

Prepare mentally and physically



Delivering an effective presentation requires mental and physical preparation. For example:

- Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation. Repeat positive statements to yourself, such as "I am relaxed and ready."
- Use breathing techniques and tension-relieving exercises to reduce stress.
- Ask yourself, "What's the worst that can happen?" and then be prepared for that possibility.
- Accept nervousness as natural and do not try to counteract it with food, caffeine, drugs, or alcohol prior to the presentation.

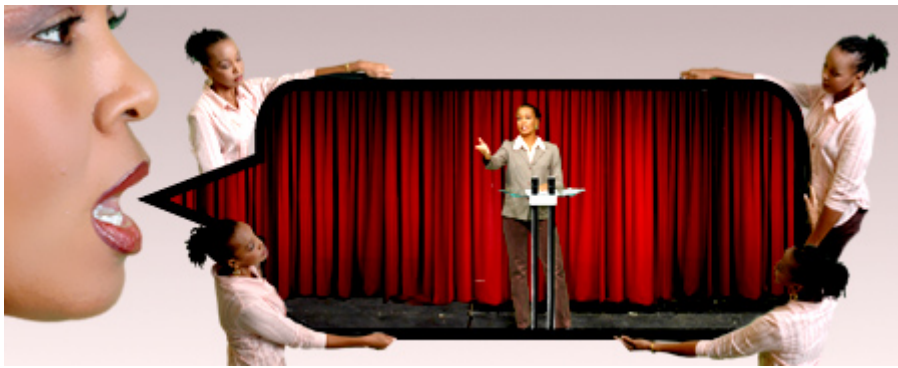
Overcome your fear of presenting



Even professional speakers get nervous. The key to successful presenting is how you handle the fear. Consider the following tactics to help you overcome your fears:

- Rehearse your presentation and know it well.
- Get to know audience members individually, by telephone before the presentation, or in person as they come into the room.
- Anticipate the questions and objections that are most likely to arise.
- Prepare physically and mentally.

Manage your delivery



Once you're actually in the room with your audience—you've prepared your messages, your materials, and yourself—you can focus on delivering the most engaging presentation possible. You will achieve your best performance if you speak effectively, project a positive image, and keep your audience engaged.

The following are some basic suggestions for effective speaking practice:

- Make your presentation conversational.
- Do not talk from a script. Talk from your notes only if you have to.
- Avoid the use of jargon or terms that may be unfamiliar to the audience.
- Face your audience and make eye contact. Avoid standing behind a podium, if you can help it.
- Walk around your audience or use movement when you want control, more involvement, or to become one of the group.
- Watch the audience for nonverbal clues about their response.
- Gesture in a relaxed, natural way and do not jingle keys or coins in your pockets.
- Breathe. It helps you relax and reduces filler language such as "um" and "er."

Leadership Insight: Body language

We learned our communication skills in the cave, but unfortunately now, we're in the modern era. Many of those things that we've evolved to be able to do very well, don't work so well anymore. We have about 10 million neurons that worry about our unconscious state of mind for every one neuron that's effectively firing away about our conscious state of mind. And what that unconscious set of neurons does is worry about our position in space, our personal safety. It tracks movement around us. It keeps track of all the things that we need to do to stay alive and be safe.

Unfortunately, those neurons didn't evolve to be able to speak in public with any comfort or ease. And I saw a wonderful example of this a few years back, I saw Richard Branson speaking at the Radio City Music Hall. Now, Richard's not a very comfortable public speaker. So what he does is, he tries to minimize the amount of time that he's actually speaking. He showed a video of Virgin Galactic, and then he arranged to have a Q&A with a local TV anchor.

The two of them sat down in two easy chairs, and Richard kind of crouched down, because he's a humble, unassuming guy, and he put his elbows on his knees like this, and his head in his hands. The TV anchor felt that he had to do the same thing — this was completely unconscious, but the TV anchor was trying to make Richard Branson the hero of the moment, he was the alpha male. And so the TV anchor crouched down also.

Well, Richard Branson responded by crouching a little lower, and the TV anchor did the same. Pretty soon, the two of them were crouched down so low that the guy who was shooting the thing, the event, had to jump down off the stage and shoot them upwards from down below.

Well, this got more and more awkward, and the audience could feel that something was going on. But again, because of all those unconscious neurons, they didn't think consciously. They couldn't figure out consciously what the matter was until the TV anchor stood up. There was this huge groan of relief, and he said, "Let's take some questions from the audience."

What we find is when you get into these situations of public speaking and you're nervous about it, you tend to do strange things. Like Richard Branson, you crouch down, perhaps, or you get something that we call "happy feet." Which is, you've got all that extra adrenalin, all that extra energy, and what happens is your feet start wandering all over the stage and your body follows along after your feet.

What I suggest is you have to get conscious of your unconscious behavior. That does take some work, it does take some practice, but it can be done. Once you master that unconscious behavior, then you can be an effective communicator and effective public speaker.

Nervous feelings about presenting can show up in our unconscious behavior.

Nick Morgan

President, Public Words, Inc.

Nick Morgan is a communication and public speaking theorist and coach. Through his communications consulting company, Public Words, he coaches executives and runs seminars on a range of communication issues.

He is a published author whose titles include "Trust Me: Four Steps to Authenticity and Charisma," "Working the Room: How to Move People to Action Through Audience-Centered Speaking," and "Give Your Speech, Change the World: How to Move Your Audience to Action."

Nick began writing speeches for Virginia Governor Charles S. Robb, and from 1998 until 2003 he served as editor of the Harvard Management Communications Letter.

He is a former Fellow at the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. After earning his doctorate in literature and rhetoric, Nick spent a number of years teaching Shakespeare and Public Speaking at the University of Virginia and Princeton University.

Use your voice

To use your voice to its best advantage, consider the following:

- Keep the tone of your voice natural and conversational.
- Speak loudly enough for everyone to hear if you do not have a microphone. Check the acoustics when you rehearse.

- Use a microphone for a large group or a large space, and practice beforehand to find a comfortable speaking volume.
- Avoid rapid-fire or drawn-out speech. Practice with a tape recorder or a colleague to get feedback.
- Be expressive. Don't speak in a monotone. Raise and lower your voice to make your point.
- Enunciate and pronounce words clearly.

Project a positive image

Your confidence in and commitment to your message are reflected by your demeanor and body language. To optimize your effectiveness, make sure to do the following:

- Project confidence through your dress and presence.
- Make sure your facial expressions convey interest in the audience. If you are too nervous to look at the entire audience, focus on individuals instead.
- Make and maintain eye contact with audience members.

Keep the audience engaged

“ Make sure you have finished speaking before your audience has finished listening. ”
–Dorothy Sarnoff

Most speakers confront one or several difficult audience members: the tuned out, the overloaded, or people so busy that they are forever thinking about other pressing issues. People in these groups will not likely hear what you have to say unless you take measures to grab their attention, and hold onto it.

To keep your audience's interest level high:

- Change what you're doing (e.g., make a sudden pause or change your vocal tone)
- Ask for a show of hands
- Add humor
- Provide analogies and vivid examples
- Introduce personal stories
- Employ compelling statistics and expert testimony
- Use visuals, such as illustrations, charts, and graphs, to good effect
- Ask a question

Questions taken from the audience can both engage the listeners and provide you with opportunities to furnish greater detail in areas that matter to your audience. However, it is important that you be well prepared for the questions you will receive.

Activity: Evaluate a presentation

Watching someone else present can give you a vivid appreciation of which behaviors are effective and which are ineffective.

(speaking in a conversational tone, using engaging voice inflection)

Good afternoon and thank you for coming. My name is Marianne Chiu and I have been the head recruiter for Treaty Elm Financial for five years. I am here today to talk with you about our recruiting process so that, as new managers, you will be able to hire people for your teams as needed.

Before we get started, um, how many of you need to add a person to your team right away?

It looks like about a third.

How many of you know of a role on your team that will open up in the next six weeks?

About ten of you.

Uh, well, if you don't have a need yet—trust me, you *will*.

Ok, um, the first step in the recruiting process is to identify which BI's are required of the interview candidate to do the job you are hiring for.

If you aren't sure which BI's go with each role, or you don't know what a BI is, just check the Treaty Elm recruiting section online.

Next, log on to the company intranet and enter the req. into the system. Make sure to include your TKM number so we know who you are. The req. will then be forwarded to a recruiter and your manager for approval. At this point, you might want to email the approving manager yourself to let them know to look out for the request that is coming their way.

Which of the following is an effective behavior when giving a presentation?

☐ Relying on a script

Not the best choice. Referencing a script continually during a presentation breaks the connection between the speaker and the audience.

☐ Using jargon

Not the best choice. Jargon can exclude certain members of the audience from understanding a presentation and should be avoided whenever possible.

☐ Using personal stories

Correct choice. Personal stories make the abstract concepts in a presentation more vivid for the audience and engage their attention.

Which of the following is *not* an effective behavior when giving a presentation?

☐ Using movement

Not the best choice. This *is* an effective behavior. Moving while making a presentation can help engage the audience and keep the presenter from making smaller, distracting, fidgety movements.

☐ Varying between rapid-fire and drawn-out speech

Correct choice. Although varying speech rhythms is an effective presentation behavior, the presenter should avoid the extremes of rapid-fire or drawn-out speech.

☐ Asking questions

Not the best choice. This *is* an effective behavior. Asking questions of the audience allows the presenter to engage them personally and establish the relevance of the presentation.

Anticipate questions



Some people feel that if there are no questions, the presentation is a success. However, if your listeners are engaged and are working with you, they most likely will have questions for you. Anticipate questions by focusing on your listeners' concerns and how your presentation might strike them. Rehearse your talk with someone else and ask for his or her questions.

When should you answer questions?

Many speakers take questions at the end of their presentation. This allows them to complete a talk within a specified time and be sure the audience has the whole picture. If you choose this approach:

- Make the transition to your question and answer (Q&A) session clear.
- Maintain control of the Q&A session by repeating the question and giving the answer to the whole group, not only to the questioner.

Some speakers also take questions during the presentation, thinking that it keeps people engaged and gives you immediately feedback about how well they understand your message. Use this approach with caution since it may cause you to lose control of your talk.

Finally, other speakers take questions at specific points during the presentation. Such times might include when you want people's reactions or when you want their ideas. However, if you choose this approach, be sure to identify these points ahead of time and flag them in your presentation so you do not forget to stop for questions.

Key Idea: How should you handle questions?

Key Idea

Many times, the success of your entire presentation will be judged on how well you handle the question and answer session. Keep in mind the following tips:

- Before your presentation, anticipate possible questions and arguments that might arise. Determine how you will respond.
- When questions are asked during your presentation, don't deny or gloss over them.
- When you know the answer, keep it clear and brief.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, direct the person to another source, offer to get the answer, or ask if someone in the audience can answer the question.
- Try to keep the tone positive and helpful. Avoid appearing defensive.
- Always repeat the question. It shows the audience that you understand the question, it gives you a moment to think of an answer, and it assures the audience can hear the question since you are facing them.
- If questions are beginning to disrupt the flow of your presentation, record them on a white board or flip chart and address them at the end of the meeting.
- When you are ready to end up the question and answer session, set the audience's expectations by saying, "I'll take two more questions, and then we'll wrap up our time together."
- Try to take questions from people seated in all sections of the audience. Avoid letting one person dominate the question and answer session.

Many times, the success of your entire presentation will be judged on how well you handle the question and answer session.

Assign presenters



Often, you would like other people to contribute to your presentation. You may be presenting the results of a group effort, or you may feel that their presence and experience will help you achieve your objective.

You should allocate speakers either by their areas of expertise with the topic or by their presentation strengths and weaknesses.

For example, people with strong presentation skills are the best candidates for opening and closing the talk, where persuasiveness counts most. They can also be most effective during

difficult time slots such as before and after lunch and at the end of the day.

If possible, arrange for a group rehearsal prior to the presentation so that each person is aware of what others are presenting.

Structure the flow

A typical group presentation flows as follows:

- The first speaker introduces the other speakers briefly and introduces the topic.
- Each subsequent speaker provides a transition to the next one with a sentence: "Now June will cover . . ."
- The last speaker summarizes the whole presentation.
- A facilitator handles all transitions.

You should also plan in advance how the group will handle questions. Each speaker should be prepared to answer questions in a particular area and to follow up if another speaker needs help. If possible, avoid having every speaker comment on every question.

Coordinate visuals

Visuals can pose logistical challenges for a group presentation. Extra planning can ensure that your visuals enhance your message rather than distract your audience. To make the most seamless presentation possible:

- Have someone other than the speaker handle the visuals during the presentation, unless the speaker prefers to do so.
- Practice to achieve synchronization if someone else is handling the visuals.
- Make sure that all slides or overheads follow the same format.
- If speakers are using different media, coordinate how you will make the transition smoothly.

Before the presentation



Evaluating your presentation is an important part of understanding its impact. Before the presentation, practice your presentation on test audiences and get their feedback. Assemble people who are similar to your audience profile.

For example, if you are presenting to experts on the topic, ask an expert. Test as many features of your presentation as you can: the visuals, logic, etc.

During the presentation

During the presentation, look for cues that will help you gauge audience reaction. Body language can indicate interest or boredom: Are listeners nodding their heads in agreement or sitting with their arms crossed? The questions they ask can help you identify areas of your presentation that need clarification.

If possible, have another person in the audience take notes on audience reaction for you. You can make notes on those issues immediately after the presentation while it is still fresh in your mind. In many situations it is appropriate to directly ask the audience how it's going. For example, "Does this make sense so far?"

After the presentation

“ There are always three speeches for every one you actually gave. The one you practiced, the one you gave, and the one you wish you gave. ”
–Dale Carnegie

After the presentation, assess its overall effectiveness. Ask for feedback from credible participants. Note what went well and what needs to be improved. Ask yourself:

- Was your objective achieved? Did you make the sale? Persuade the audience to adopt your recommendation?
- Did the audience seem engaged and attentive?
- If you're going to give the presentation again, what changes can you make to improve it?
- What general lessons did you learn about presenting?

Creating and delivering a presentation is a process that, like any other process, can be improved. Once you identify the root causes of below-standard performance, you can address them directly.

Leadership Insight: The invisible audience

In tough economic times, it seems like the first things most companies do is they cut their travel budgets. In fact, our clients pretty much just cut them off completely: all nonessential business travel went away.

But what did happen is they started talking to us about what can you do virtually, what can you do over Webex, what can you do over a live meeting? Because that's how they wanted to have training that had traditionally been done face-to-face, like presentation skills or executive engagement skills — they were looking to do this virtually now.

So I put together a virtual presentation designed to showcase our capabilities in that area and it was designed to be co-presented by myself and my CEO, a guy named Ed Musselwhite.

The first time we presented it, we put so much work into it. You know, you stumble over your words a little bit, people aren't maybe as interactive as you would like them to be, and suddenly this little voice started going in my head like "this isn't going as planned, this isn't going well" and it was unnerving.

I remember feeling a level of nervousness and anxiety that I hadn't felt in years, but I stayed the course, stuck with it. Ed seemed to be doing fine, and we got to the end of the presentation. And what was interesting is when we had our internal debrief, the first thing Ed shared with me was, "Boy that was really tough. I was struggling. I didn't think that went well at all and in fact I'm really kind of concerned about the overall results of that." And I was feeling the same way.

Well here's the kicker. We got evaluations back, they were off the charts — said it was one of the best virtual programs people had ever seen. And then we generated a tremendous amount of business discussions following up from that. So it was very successful.

This is what I've learned about virtual presentations. Because you can't see the audience, your imagination fills things in, and it results in something I call "virtual disparity." That's the difference between how you think you are doing and how the audience perceives you as doing. That's usually not in your favor.

Now how did we get through that? What allowed us to not derail when we were experiencing those nerves? Well there's really three things. First, you do have to know your audience really well. You have to have done your homework, understand their business, understand the business issues, really be clear why it is they're even wanting to hear from you.

Second thing is you have to know your material. You really have to thoughtfully put the presentation together, every slide virtually is truly a moment of truth. And it's not just the slides, each slide should have your speaker notes literally outlined on it. How do you want to cover that, what are your transitions, what are your animations, what are you going to say during those things. Lot of planning has to go into it.

And then finally, the third thing, there is no substitute for practice. You know you've got to talk this all the way through two, three, maybe even four times, if you can record yourself and play it back and look at it, even better.

And what that will do, when that little voice in your head says, "Ooh this isn't going as planned" or it says "Maybe I don't think this is going so well," you'll have that muscle memory of that content, you'll have that fall back preparation that will bring you to that conclusion.

And I will tell you, nine times out of ten, the audience perception of how things went is going to be much better than how you thought it went.

When you deliver a virtual presentation, you can't rely on cues from the crowd, so practice and preparation are more important than ever.

Brad Holst
Principal and Executive Director, Solutions Design, Mandel
Communications

Brad Holst is a Principal and the Executive Director of Solutions Design for Mandel Communications, a global company that builds individual and group communication skills into winning competitive advantages for business organizations.

Brad and his team have designed and delivered strategic and tactical communication training and coaching solutions for Mandel's corporate clients in the Fortune 1,000-size range in a wide variety of industries.

He is the lead creator of the proprietary models and processes now found in Mandel's powerful suite of communication content-planning and delivery tools and techniques, including the Mandel Blueprint™ and the Mandel Story Board™.

Brad is a masterful teacher, coach, and consultant, with a rare level of business acumen based on his former leadership roles with three market-leading companies: The Walt Disney Company, The Clorox Company, and Armor All Products. Web site: www.mandel.com.

Overview

This section provides interactive exercises so you can practice what you've learned. These exercises are self-checks only; your answers will not be used to evaluate your performance in the topic.

Scenario

Assume the role of a manager in a fictional situation and explore different outcomes based on your choices (5-10 minutes).

Check Your Knowledge

Assess your understanding of key points by completing a 10-question quiz (10 minutes).

Scenario: Part 1

Part 1

Every year, Oscar and his product management group introduce new products at a national conference for BestPet, Inc., a manufacturer of pet products. To prepare the company's 150-member sales force to promote new products to retail customers, the product line managers outline new product features and benefits.

This year Oscar and his group will announce an exciting new product: the Trail Hound—a "doggie backpack" for dogs to carry their food and water during hikes with their owners. The Trail Hound has an innovative new compartment system. Oscar will need to explain this feature clearly, so the sales reps can demonstrate it to customers.

Oscar is scheduled to deliver his presentation just after lunch. In the weeks before the conference, he begins preparing visuals that he hopes will deepen the sales reps' understanding of the new product and inspire them to sell it.

Which kind of visual would be the *most compelling* for Oscar to use?

- A one-page handout that lists the top 10 reasons why the Trail Hound backpack is better than any competing doggie backpack that he will hand out during his presentation.

Not the best choice.

If you use handouts, avoid distributing them during the presentation. Distributing reading materials during your presentation only detracts from it. Also, text-only visuals aren't the most compelling. Since Oscar is giving his presentation right after lunch, he can expect his audience's energy to be at its lowest. (People tend to get sleepy after eating, and the sales reps will already have attended several other product presentations that morning.) Oscar will need to make his visuals as attention-getting as possible.

- A flip chart that depicts two or three easy-to-see step diagrams demonstrating how the Trail Hound's compartment feature works.

Not the best choice.

Though diagrams and pictures are valuable in a visual, a flip chart is not effective for large groups. Oscar's audience consists of 150 people, and those sitting in the back of the conference room probably wouldn't be able to see the information on the chart. Also, flip charts are notoriously difficult to transport.

- A computer-based slide with an image contrasting Trail Hound's new compartment system with its top competitor's, and including a bulleted list of several advantages of the Trail Hound system.

Correct choice.

To be most effective, slides should contain just one concept. Also, a combination of words and pictures is six times more effective than words alone. This visual will likely prove very effective, because it contains a single concept (how the Trail Hound's compartment feature compares to the competition's corresponding feature), and a mix of words and pictures.

Scenario: Part 2

Part 2

Oscar decides to create a computer-based presentation composed of word-and-picture slides. He also elects to provide audience members with handouts detailing the Trail Hound's important specifications as they enter the conference room.

Next, he rehearses his talk. By nature, Oscar is a nervous presenter, so he brushes up on various public-speaking skills. For example, using a tape recorder, he practices keeping his voice natural

and conversational, as well as finding a comfortable speaking volume.

As a final step in the rehearsal process, Oscar visualizes how he will handle questions from his audience. Then he remembers that he hasn't yet decided when to take questions.

When should Oscar take questions during his presentation?

- To ensure that his audience remains engaged, Oscar should take questions during the presentation whenever an audience member raises a hand.

Not the best choice.

Although this approach may keep people engaged and provide feedback on how well the sales reps understand his message, Oscar also risks losing control of his presentation. Because he finds public speaking stressful, he should avoid doing anything that might distract his focus or cause him to lose track of where he is in his talk.

- To make sure he provides the "big picture" first, Oscar should ask that people hold questions until the end of the presentation, after he has completed his talk.

Not the best choice.

Although this approach would allow Oscar to complete his talk and make sure the sales reps have the full picture, it wouldn't enable him to gather feedback about how well the reps understand his message and make any necessary adjustments in his talk. This could be a problem, given that the main purpose of Oscar's presentation is to make sure the sales reps understand the new product clearly enough to sell it.

- To continually gauge his audience's reactions to his message, Oscar should take questions at specific, designated points during the presentation.

Correct choice.

This approach lets Oscar periodically gauge audience members' reactions and hear their ideas, giving him a sense of how well the sales reps understand his message. Yet because it is more structured, this approach doesn't raise the risk that Oscar will lose control of his talk. In choosing this approach, Oscar should select specific points in his presentation and flag them in his notes so that he remembers to stop for questions.

Scenario: Part 3

Part 3

Oscar decides that he will take questions at specific points throughout his presentation. The day of the presentation arrives. The sales reps pick up their handouts and file into the auditorium.

When Oscar pauses at one of the designated times in his talk, many sales reps ask questions. Since the audience is large, Oscar repeats and rephrases each question, and then provides the answer for the entire group.

Oscar wraps up his presentation with a summary of the new product's specifications and benefits. Then he packs up his materials and heads back to his hotel room. There, he reviews his presentation and wonders whether it was a success overall. He asks himself how he might assess possible weak spots in his presentation skills.

Which of the following might indicate a *weak* spot in Oscar's presentation skills?

- Many members of Oscar's audience asked a lot of questions over the course of the presentation.

Not the best choice.

Though some people feel that the absence of questions signals a successful talk, questions actually indicate that listeners are engaging with you and with the material you're presenting. The fact that the reps asked a lot of questions would not suggest an ineffective talk. However, Oscar should still make sure that he's answered questions clearly, perhaps by periodically asking his audience, "Is there anything that doesn't make sense so far?"

- Oscar remembers concluding his talk with a summary of the Trail Hound's key benefits.

Correct choice.

The fact that Oscar ended his talk with a summary indicates a weak spot in his presentation skills. Instead, he should have wrapped things up with a strong call to action. A call to action does include a reiteration of your presentation's key message, but it also contains recommendations for what audience members should do with the information you've just shared.

For example, Oscar could have urged his audience to emphasize particular aspects of the Trail Hound's compartment feature to customers. Or, he could have obtained their buy-in by announcing a prize for the sales rep that sells the most units.

- During the presentation, the sales reps ignored the handouts they had received upon entering the auditorium.

Not the best choice.

The fact that the sales reps ignored their handouts does not indicate a weak spot in Oscar's skills. Handouts can actually distract listeners if they become the audience's focal point. Thus, if the sales reps ignored the handouts, they likely were fully engaged during the talk.

Scenario: Conclusion

Conclusion

After weighing various factors, Oscar decides that his presentation was successful in many respects, although he makes a mental note to wrap up next year's talk with a strong call to action.

Effective presentation skills are essential to any manager. Skilled presenters carefully plan the visuals and other elements of their talks, as well as rehearse their presentations ahead of time. They also structure their talk in ways that enable them to best achieve their objective; for example, deciding when would be the best time to take questions. Finally, to identify areas that might need improvement, they always evaluate their presentations.

Delivering a compelling presentation requires careful preparation. But a successful presentation is well worth the extra effort.

Activity: Check Your Knowledge: Question 1

Which of the following is *not* a recommended strategy to help prepare yourself mentally and physically to make a presentation?

- Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation and repeat to yourself positive statements, such as, "I am relaxed and ready."

Not the best choice.

Visualizing a successful presentation actually *is* a recommended strategy for preparing yourself mentally and physically to make a presentation. The strategy that is *not* recommended is ignoring nervousness or counteracting it with drugs or alcohol (which won't likely help you deliver your presentation effectively). Instead, you should accept nervousness as natural.

- Identify the worst that can happen and then prepare for that possibility

Not the best choice.

Identifying and preparing for possible problems actually *is* a recommended strategy for preparing yourself mentally and physically to make a presentation. The strategy that is *not* recommended is ignoring nervousness or counteracting it with drugs or alcohol (which won't likely help you deliver your presentation effectively). Instead, you should accept nervousness as natural.

- Ignore feelings of severe nervousness or consider counteracting them through muscle relaxants or a glass of wine—whichever means works best for you.

Correct choice.

You should accept nervousness as natural. Ignoring it—or trying to counteract it by consuming drugs, caffeine, or alcohol before your presentation—won't likely help you deliver your presentation effectively. However, visualizing a successful presentation and identifying and preparing for possible problems are both strategies that can help you prepare mentally.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 2

The type of presentation you choose depends on _____.

- Your purpose

Correct choice.

Your purpose drives the type of presentation you choose. Examples of presentation types include sales, persuasion, status report, product demonstration, and business plan or strategy. After selecting the appropriate presentation type, you should then consider other factors as well—including size of your audience and formality of the setting.

- The formality of the setting

Not the best choice.

Though it's important to eventually consider the formality of the setting in designing your presentation, you should first select the type of presentation based on your purpose. Examples of presentation types include sales, persuasion, status report, product demonstration, and business plan or strategy. After selecting the appropriate presentation type, you should then consider other factors as well—including size of your audience and formality of the setting.

- The size of your audience

Not the best choice.

Though it's important to eventually consider the size of your audience in designing your presentation, you should first select the type of presentation based on your purpose. Examples of presentation types include sales, persuasion, status report, product demonstration, and business plan or strategy. After selecting the appropriate presentation type, you should then consider other factors as well—including size of your audience and formality of the setting.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 3

In deciding what to say during your presentation, what's an important "don't" to keep in mind?

- Don't neutralize contrary arguments coming from your audience

Not the best choice.

Actually, you *should* neutralize contrary arguments coming from your audience in order to persuade listeners to accept your message. The correct choice is "Don't talk just about facts." While it's important to provide facts to support your ideas, you also need to identify the emotional underpinnings of your message by explaining why your audience should care about what you have to say. Moreover, too many facts can overload your audience.

- Don't talk just about facts

Correct choice.

While it's important to provide facts to support your ideas, you also need to identify the emotional underpinnings of your message by explaining why your audience should care about what you have to say. Moreover, too many facts can overload your audience.

- Don't describe the action you want your audience to take

Not the best choice.

Actually, you *should* explain the actions you want your audience to take, so that you achieve the intended outcome of your presentation. The correct choice is "Don't talk just about facts." While it's important to provide facts to support your ideas, you also need to identify the emotional underpinnings of your message by explaining why your audience should care about what you have to say. Moreover, too many facts can overload your audience.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 4

Most experts agree that it is important to limit the number of messages and main ideas covered in a single presentation. What is this generally agreed upon number?

- Two

Not the best choice.

Instead of two, you should try to limit the number of your messages and main ideas to about five. That's because five (plus or minus two) seems to be the number of messages that most adults can remember.

- Five

Correct choice.

You should try to limit the number of your messages and main ideas to about five. That's because five (plus or minus two) seems to be the number of messages that most adults can remember.

- Nine

Not the best choice.

Instead of nine, you should try to limit the number of your messages and main ideas to about five. That's because five (plus or minus two) seems to be the number of messages that most adults can remember.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 5

During the opening of your presentation, you describe the importance of the topic to your audience, establish your credibility, and preview the main points you will cover. What else do you need to do during the opening?

- Include clear statements of the main points

Not the best choice.

You include clear statements of your main points during the body of your presentation, not the opening. The additional step you need to take during the opening is to define the purpose of the presentation. Ideally, your purpose should be the first thing you tell your audience.

- Define the purpose of the presentation

Correct choice.

In addition to describing the importance of your topic to your audience, establishing your credibility, and previewing your main points, you also want to define the purpose of your presentation. Ideally, your purpose should be the first thing you tell your audience.

- Identify a clear problem that you and your audience will solve together

Not the best choice.

You identify a clear problem that you and your audience will solve together during the second part of your presentation—the need or problem statement—not the opening. The additional step you need to take during the opening is to define the purpose of the presentation. Ideally, your purpose should be the first thing you tell your audience.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 6

During the body of a presentation, what is an effective way to involve the audience?

- Ask your audience for suggestions and questions

Correct choice.

Asking listeners for their suggestions and questions and then responding makes your presentation truly interactive. When you ask for suggestions or questions is up to you. In an informal setting, you might encourage audience members to ask questions or make suggestions at any time. In a more formal setting, you may explain during your opening when you'll take

questions and suggestions. Either way, audience members will listen more attentively when they know that you're going to consider their input.

- Offer visual aids, such as a slide show, to support your main messages

Not the best choice.

While visual aids may help audience members comprehend your message, they do not actively involve the audience. For true audience involvement, you need to invite listeners to make suggestions and ask questions. When you ask for suggestions or questions is up to you. In an informal setting, you might encourage audience members to ask questions or make suggestions at any time. In a more formal setting, you may explain during your opening when you'll take questions and suggestions. Either way, audience members will listen more attentively when they know that you're going to consider their input.

- Pass out sheets of paper on which audience members can take notes reflecting on the content of your presentation

Not the best choice.

While taking notes may help audience members reflect on and comprehend your message, it doesn't actively involve the audience. For true audience involvement, you need to invite listeners to make suggestions and ask questions. When you ask for suggestions or questions is up to you. In an informal setting, you might encourage audience members to ask questions or make suggestions at any time. In a more formal setting, you may explain during your opening when you'll take questions and suggestions. Either way, audience members will listen more attentively when they know that you're going to consider their input.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 7

How long should a presentation be?

- Not more than one hour

Not the best choice.

Some presentations may require more than one hour to communicate your message effectively. Thus, your presentation should be as long as it needs to be to convey at least one message clearly and completely.

However, it's important to tell your audience up front how long your presentation will take—and then stick to the allocated time so listeners won't become restless or tired.

- In general, two hours

Not the best choice.

Some presentations may require more than two hours to communicate your message effectively. Thus, your presentation should be as long as it needs to be to convey at least one message clearly and completely.

However, it's important to tell your audience up front how long your presentation will take—and then stick to the allocated time so listeners won't become restless or tired.

- As long as it needs to be to convey at least one message clearly and completely

Correct choice.

A presentation should be as long as it needs to be to convey at least one message clearly and completely. However, it's important to tell your audience up front how long your presentation will take—and then stick to the allocated time so listeners won't become restless or tired.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 8

When is an appropriate time to distribute handouts during a presentation?

- While making your need or problem statement

Not the best choice.

You should usually avoid handing out materials while delivering any part of your presentation, including the need or problem statement, because doing so can detract from what you are saying at the time. For the best results, distribute handouts either before the presentation, giving people enough time to absorb the content before you start speaking, or after the presentation, so your audience has a summary of your key points to review.

- During the call to action

Not the best choice.

You should usually avoid handing out materials while delivering any part of your presentation, including the call to action, because doing so can detract from what you are saying at the time. For the best results, distribute handouts either before the presentation, giving people enough time to absorb the content before you start speaking, or after the presentation, so your audience has a summary of your key points to review.

- Before or after the presentation

Correct choice.

For the best results, distribute handouts either before the presentation, giving people enough time to absorb the content before you start speaking, or after the presentation, so your audience has a summary of your key points to review.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 9

What aspects of your presentation most affect how persuasive you are?

- Expert testimony, statistics, visual aids, and audience involvement

Not the best choice.

Expert testimony, statistics, visual aids, and audience involvement can make your presentation more interesting, but your persuasiveness is largely a product of your enthusiasm, credibility, and personal belief in the subject. When you believe in what you're saying—and let your enthusiasm show—you're more likely to persuade your audience to accept your message.

- [Personal stories, examples, humor, and analogies](#)

Not the best choice.

Personal stories, examples, humor, and analogies can make your presentation more interesting, but your persuasiveness is largely a product of your enthusiasm, credibility, and personal belief in the subject. When you believe in what you're saying—and let your enthusiasm show—you're more likely to persuade your audience to accept your message.

- [Your enthusiasm, credibility, and personal belief in the subject](#)

Correct choice.

Your persuasiveness is largely a product of your enthusiasm, credibility, and personal belief in the subject. When you believe in what you're saying—and let your enthusiasm show—you're more likely to persuade your audience to accept your message.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 10

What's an effective way to handle a question from an audience member for which you don't have the answer?

- [Get the individual's name, write the question down, and ask them to talk with you at the end of the presentation. Don't state that you don't know the answer.](#)

Not the best choice.

If you don't know the answer to a question, don't deny or gloss over the fact by avoiding admitting that you don't have the answer. Instead, direct the person to another source or offer to find the answer after the presentation.

- [First, indicate that the question is a good one. Admit that you don't know the answer, then move on to the next question.](#)

Not the best choice.

If you don't know the answer to a question, don't leave the audience member hanging by admitting that you don't have the answer and then moving on to the next question. Instead, direct the person to another source or offer to find the answer after the presentation.

- [Direct the person to a source or offer to find the answer after the presentation.](#)

Correct choice.

If you don't know the answer to a question, it's best not to deny or gloss over the fact. Instead, direct the person to another source or offer to find the answer after the presentation.

Check Your Knowledge: Results

Your score:

Steps for setting up a presentation

1. Define your objectives.

- What outcome do you want? What do you want your audience to do as a result of your presentation? Your objective determines what you say and how you say it.
- Examine your purpose. Do you want to inform, persuade, or sell? Do you want the audience to understand, learn, or take action? When do you want your audience to take action and how?
- Be explicit in defining your objectives. The more explicit you are, the more likely you are to design a presentation that supports them. For example: "I want the audience to request that their direct reports participate in the pilot system rollout in Q1."

2. Get to know your audience.

- Determine your audience's level of knowledge, interest and positioning, and ability to act on what you present prior to the presentation.
- Make sure you know what is in it for them. Keeping your presentation audience-focused is critical.
- If you are not familiar with the group, ask the liaison for the meeting to give you some background. If possible, try to contact at least one person who fits the audience profile.

3. Select a strategy that matches your objective.

- For example, making a sale will require a persuasive bent that might include features and benefits and competitive data comparisons.
- Include whatever information helps you achieve your objective. Omit anything extraneous, distracting, or interfering.

4. Match your presentation to your audience.

- For example, a presentation to a technical group of decision makers is going to contain more quantitative detail than a presentation to a group of less technical junior managers.
- In cases where there is a mixed audience, try to address the different perspectives explicitly to keep everyone interested. For example, "This will affect the product managers like this... and the engineers like this..."
- In cases where the audience is likely to be hostile, begin by emphasizing concerns you have in common. Turn the negative into a positive, if possible.
- To energize an apathetic, tired, or hungry audience, open with a startling statement or a vivid illustration.

Steps for creating a presentation

1. Brainstorm ideas.

2. Identify your message and supporting facts.

3. **Select the number of points that will make the case to your audience within the given time.**
 - It is better to make fewer points and make them well.
 - If you do not have time to make a point clear or acceptable to your audience, save it for another presentation.
 - If you are not sure how long your talk may run, prepare extra supporting material such as statistics, analogies, or examples that can be omitted if you are running out of time.
4. **Organize your points.**
 - To keep your audience on track, make the logic of your presentation clear at all times.
 - Place your strongest point first or last. Do not bury your best ideas.
 - In the opening, state where you are headed and what you want to prove or demonstrate.
 - In the body, support your main points with examples, visuals, and anecdotes.
 - At appropriate intervals, note what you have already covered and where you are about to go.
 - To close, present your conclusions and give the audience a call to action.
5. **Prepare a list of possible questions and objections, and decide how you will address them if they arise.**
6. **Prepare your visuals and support materials. These materials can help your audience to:**
 - Remember facts.
 - Understand ideas, relationships, or physical layouts.
 - Recognize that you are moving on to a new topic.

Steps for practicing and evaluating

1. **Rehearse.**
 - Rehearse with the equipment and visuals you will actually use at the event.
 - Rehearse the entire presentation each time you practice, including how you are going to stand and move, and how you are going to use the visuals.
 - Rehearse out loud until the presentation does not sound memorized.
 - Concentrate on the subject or message and your desire to communicate, not on your notes.
 - If the presentation is a high-profile one to a large group, you can videotape your practice session to evaluate it more closely.
2. **Gather feedback prior to your presentation.**
 - Practice your presentation on test audiences and get their feedback. Assemble people who are similar to your audience profile. For example, if you are presenting to experts on the topic, get an expert.
 - Test as many features of your presentation as you can: the visuals, logic, etc.
 - What kind of impact do you make on this group?
3. **Evaluate the progress of your presentation while it is in process.**
 - Look for audience cues such as interest or boredom.
 - If possible, have another person in the audience take notes on audience reaction for you.
 - Make notes on those issues immediately after the presentation while it's still fresh in your mind.
 - Note questions asked. They may point to areas of your presentation that need clarification.
 - Ask the audience how it's going, if appropriate.
4. **Evaluate your presentation after you have finished.**
 - Assess the overall effectiveness of your presentation. Was your objective achieved? Did the audience seem engaged and attentive? Note what went well and what needs to be improved.
 - Ask for feedback from credible participants.

- If you are going to make the presentation again, what changes would you make to improve it?
 - What general lessons have you learned about making presentations?
5. **Reflect on what you have learned and use your new knowledge to improve your next presentation.**

Tips for setting up a presentation

- Identify the presentation objective—it will drive everything else you do.
- Learn as much as you can about your listeners, their biases, and their expectations.
- Address your topic from the audience's perspective.
- Tailor your presentation to accommodate the context—the physical environment, time of day, and significant ongoing events that may affect your listeners.

Tips for organizing a presentation

- Make the logic of your presentation clear at all times.
- Place your strongest point first or last. Do not bury your best ideas.
- State in the opening where you are headed and what you want to prove or demonstrate.
- At appropriate intervals, note what you have already covered and where you are about to go.
- Summarize your main points and present your conclusions in the close.

Tips for creating visuals

- Use a single idea with no more than six lines per slide.
- Be selective with your words.
- Use pictures where possible.
- Don't use vertical lettering.
- Use a maximum of two sizes of type per page.
- Use bullets, not numbers, for non-sequential items.
- Use uppercase and lowercase letters. Only use all uppercase for titles or acronyms.

Tips for presenting effectively

- Do not talk from a script. Talk from notes.
- Face your audience and make eye contact.
- Walk around your audience when you want control, more involvement, or to become one of the group.
- Do not jingle keys or coins in your pockets.
- Use gestures in a relaxed and normal way.
- Use your voice effectively.
- Keep your focus on your message and your audience.

Preliminary planning worksheet

<i>Preliminary Planning Worksheet</i>
<i>Use this worksheet to help you plan the content of your presentation.</i>
Topic:
Requested by:
Objectives
If your presentation is a success, what will be the immediate results?
Main Messages
What must the audience understand and remember from your presentation?
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Supporting Facts
What facts support your main messages?
Message 1
Message 2
Message 3
Message 4
Message 5

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Audience characteristics worksheet

<i>Audience Characteristics Worksheet</i>	
<i>Use this worksheet as you prepare your presentation.</i>	
Question	Notes
1. Who are your listeners and what is their relationship to your topic?	
2. How well informed are they about the subject matter?	
3. What do they need to know?	
4. What are their expectations of the larger event? Of your presentation?	
5. What do they know about you? What else might they need to know?	
6. What is their opinion of you or the organization you represent?	
7. Are they attending by choice or by requirement?	
8. Are they likely to be receptive? Enthusiastic? Polite? Hostile? Apathetic?	
9. Are there other obstacles, history, or expectations that you need to take into account?	
10. What presentation techniques might best capture their attention and get your points across most effectively? (e.g., demonstrations, personal stories, multimedia)	

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Presentation context worksheet

<i>Presentation Context Worksheet</i>	
<i>Use this worksheet to better understand the context of your presentation.</i>	
Question	Notes
1. Is the presentation formal or informal?	
2. When you present, will the audience have just finished eating, drinking, working, or doing something active?	
3. Who will speak before and after you? What do they plan to say?	
4. Are you the first or last speaker of the program? The day? The morning or afternoon?	
5. Are you expected to answer questions or leave copies of your presentation?	
6. How much time do you have for the presentation? Can your message be delivered in that time? If not, can it be adapted and still be effective?	
7. Will the physical setting of the room require you to adapt your presentation in any way?	

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Presentation outline worksheet

<i>Presentation Outline Worksheet</i>		
<i>Use this worksheet to help you organize your content most effectively, identify any visuals or support materials that will enhance your presentation, and estimate the time you will need. You may have to revise your content if it appears to exceed your time limitations.</i>		
Your Content	Visuals/Support Materials	Time
Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State your purpose. • Preview your main points. • Make your audience want to listen. 		
Body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get across the main points of your presentation. 		
Conclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize your content. • Challenge the audience to take action. 		

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Logistics worksheet

<i>Logistics Worksheet</i>		
<i>Complete this worksheet prior to your presentation to confirm that you haven't forgotten any of the logistical details</i>		
Presentation Topic:		
Date:		
Presenter(s):		
Presentation Location:		
Meeting Coordinator and Phone Number:		
Site Contact Person and Phone Number:		
Number of People Attending:		
Handouts:		
Room Setup		
<input type="checkbox"/> Auditorium	<input type="checkbox"/> Horseshoe	<input type="checkbox"/> Podium
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakout Sessions	<input type="checkbox"/> Stage
<input type="checkbox"/> Conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Tables: Front, Side or Back	
Other: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>		
Equipment and Supplies		
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Extension Cord(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Video equipment/VCR player and monitors
<input type="checkbox"/> Overhead Projector/Spine Bulbs	<input type="checkbox"/> Flip Chart Tape/Markers	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone Line(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Projection Table	<input type="checkbox"/> LCD Projector	<input type="checkbox"/> Microphone
Other: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>		
Other		

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Objections worksheet

<i>Objections Worksheet</i>		
<i>Complete this worksheet prior to your presentation to identify possible objections or issues that may be raised and prepare appropriate responses.</i>		
Audience Member/Group	Public Issues or Objections	Potential Responses (Acknowledge, Address, and Resolve)

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Why Develop Others?

“At the end of the day, you bet on people, not strategies.”

Larry Bossidy

Former CEO, AlliedSignal

In today's global business environment, markets and regulations change quickly. Competitors constantly innovate. Technological changes are the norm.

In order to outmaneuver the competition and meet the demands of the moment, organizations must be agile. They must execute flawlessly. And they must transform themselves continuously.

Are your leaders ready?

Dr. Noel M. Tichy

Professor

University of Michigan Ross School of Business

We have now entered an era where I don't care what industry you're in, you need leaders who

can make decisions, make judgment calls at every single level. All the way down to the interface with the customer.

If you go to a company like Google or any of the high tech companies, a lot of the innovation that Amazon does is happening right at the front line. Go ahead, try it, put it out there, we'll learn from it. That cannot happen if the senior leadership doesn't have a commitment to both develop the leadership capability, but develop the business through engaging people at all levels of the organization.

Becoming a teaching organization

I like to tell parents that they cannot delegate their responsibility to develop their children. And I think it is the same in an organization. Day in and day out the person that has the biggest impact on people in the organization is the next level above and the associates around and below. And so to build a learning organization I say is not enough. Learning could be, you know we are learning cooking, we are learning this or that, but teaching organizations, when I learned something, I have a responsibility to teach my colleagues.

So everybody takes responsibility for generating new knowledge and it is not enough to be a learner, you then have to translate it into teaching.

The Virtuous Teaching Cycle

The role of a leader is to ensure that the people who work for them and around them are better every day. There's only one way to make people better. It's to teach them, learn from them, create what I call "virtuous teaching cycles", not command and control.

A virtuous teaching cycle is teach learn, teach learn. And the leader has a responsibility for reducing the hierarchy, for having a point of view to start the discussion, but then to be responsible to hear everyone's voice, get everyone involved in a disciplined way. It is not a free for all. But it is the leader's responsibility to create that virtuous teaching cycle.

A wonderful example of virtuous teaching cycle is the program that Roger Enrico ran at Pepsi, where every one of the 10 vice presidents comes with a business project.

Roger Enrico gets smarter as result of five days with 10 vice presidents, because he's learning from them. He needs to lower the hierarchy. He needs to be open to learning. And in turn, the people participating need to be energized and empowered to come up and engage in problem solving.

Another example is at Best Buy, where every morning in the stores you would bring 20 associates or so together and they would review the profit and loss statement from the day before, what we learned from the different customer segments in our stores, what we can do to improve our performance this day. And they do that every single day. The store manager was learning mostly from the associates on the floor.

That was a virtuous teaching cycle where everybody is teaching everybody, everybody is learning and the result has been an incredible result at Best Buy.

"The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership."

- Harvey S. Firestone

Founder, Firestone Tire and Rubber Co

There are clear advantages to leader-led development.

But for many leaders, taking on teaching, coaching, and other development responsibilities can seem daunting. You might avoid taking on these roles due to lack of time, resources, or your own lack of comfort with this role.

The following tips and resources can help you impart valuable learning to your team every day.

To develop others...

- Start with a Teachable Point of View

The first requirement of being able to develop other leaders is to have what I call a teachable point of view. I often give the example of, if I ran a tennis camp and you just came to day one of the tennis camp, I better have a teachable point of view on how I teach tennis. So you are standing there looking at me and it has got four elements. One, the ideas, well how do I teach the backhand, the forehand, the serve, rules of tennis. Then if I am a good tennis coach, I have a set of values. What are the right behaviors I want, how do I want you to dress, how do I want you to behave on the tennis court.

But if that's all I have, what do I do? Show you a power point presentation and then expect you to hit 500 backhands, 500 serves, run around for eight hours. I have to have a teachable point of view on emotional energy. How do I motivate you to buy in to the ideas and values?

On one end of the spectrum it could be I threaten you with corporal punishment, the other I can give you stock options, I can make you feel good about yourself, I can help you develop as a human being, what motivates you.

And then finally, how do I make the tough judgment calls, the yes/no, decisions as the tennis coach, the ball is in, the ball is out. I don't hire consultants and set up a committee, it is yes/no. And the same with running a business, what are the products, services, distribution channels, customer segments that are going to grow top line growth and profitability of the organization.

What are the values that I want everyone in the organization to have, how do I emotionally energize thousands of people, and then how do I make the yes/no, judgments on people and on business issues. So the fundamental building block of being able to develop other leaders is to have that teachable point of view just like the tennis coach.

To develop others...

- Lead with questions

Questions are hugely important because you want to create dialogue and again, what I call a virtuous teaching cycle where the teacher learns from the students and vice versa. Which means everybody ought to be free to ask whatever is on their mind, whatever it will take to get clarity and understanding, but it is not the leader just coming in and freeform asking questions. I believe the leader has a responsibility for framing the discussion, for having as best they can a teachable point of view, they may need help from their people in flushing it out, but they need to set the stage but then it has to be a very interactive, what I call virtuous teaching cycle environment, teach learn, teach learn, teach learn.

To develop others...

- Make it part of your routine

A good example to me of an outstanding leader developing other leaders is Myrtle Potter who at the time I am commenting was Chief Operating Officer of Genentech running the commercial side of the business. And she would take time at the end of every single meeting and do some coaching of the whole team on how we could perform as a team better, and then she would

often take individuals and say, could we spend 10 minutes over a cup of coffee, I want to give you some feedback and coaching on that report that you just presented on or how you are handling a particularly difficult human resource issue, but it was part of her regular routine. And I think the challenge for all of us as leaders is to make that a way of life and it is built into the fabric of how we lead and it is not a one off event, three times a year. It is happening almost every day.

To develop others...

- Make it a priority

One of the biggest challenges in getting people kind of on this path is to overcome some of their own resistance, either fear or the way I view the world I don't have time for this, everybody can make time. Roger Enrico is CEO of Pepsi. He didn't have time to go off for a week at a time and run training sessions. He had to readjust his calendar. So it requires you to look in the mirror and say, is this important. If it is important, of course I can make the time. Then I have to get over my own anxiety on how well I can do it, but it is a commitment to get on the path that says: this is how I am going to drive my own performance and the performance of my colleagues.

To develop others...

- Learn to teach

I think the biggest mistake is to assume you are going to be good at it right off the bat. It is like learning anything else. First time you go out and try and play tennis, good luck. But you got to stay with it and you got to engage your people in helping make you better and them better. And so it is a journey you need to get on, not I am going to do it perfectly when I start out.

If you want to be a great leader who is a great teacher, it's very simple. You have got to dive into the deep end of the pool. But you've got to dive into the pool with preparation. I don't want you drowning. I want you succeeding. It is extraordinarily rewarding for most human beings to teach others. I think once you can turn that switch on, it is self perpetuating. You get a lot of reinforcement, your team is better. You perform better because your performance goes up and it becomes this virtuous teaching cycle.

Your opportunity to develop others

We've heard why developing others can drive greater business results, and how to make the most of your leader-led development efforts. The materials provided in Develop Others enable you to create personalized learning experiences for YOUR team within the flow of their daily activities. Use the guides and projects to engage your team quickly. And to explore how key concepts apply to them in the context of their priorities and goals.

The value of teaching is the performance of the organization is totally dependent on making your people smarter and more aligned every day as the world changes. In the 21st century we are not going to get by with command and control. We are going to have to get by with knowledge creation. The way you create knowledge in an organization is you create these virtuous teaching cycles where you are teaching and learning simultaneously, responding to customer demands and changes, responding to changes in the global environment. My bottom line is if you're not teaching, you're not leading.

A leader's most important role in any organization is making good judgments — well informed, wise decisions about people, strategy and crises that produce the desired outcomes. When a leader shows consistently good judgment, little else matters. When he or she shows poor judgment nothing else matters. In addition to making their own good judgment calls, good leaders develop good judgment among their team members.

Dr. Noel M. Tichy**Professor, University of Michigan Ross School of Business**

Dr. Noel M. Tichy is Professor of Management and Organizations, and Director of the Global Business Partnership at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business. The Global Business Partnership links companies and students around the world to develop and engage business leaders to incorporate global citizenship activities, both environmental projects and human capital development, for those at the bottom of the pyramid. Previously, Noel was head of General Electric's Leadership Center at Crotonville, where he led the transformation to action learning at GE. Between 1985 and 1987, he was Manager of Management Education for GE where he directed its worldwide development efforts at Crotonville. He currently consults widely in both the private and public sectors. He is a senior partner in Action Learning Associates. Noel is author of numerous books and articles, including:

For more information about Noel Tichy, visit <http://www.noeltichy.com>.

Share an Idea

Leaders are in a unique position to recognize the ideas and tools that are most relevant and useful for their teams. If you only have a few minutes, consider sharing an idea or tool from this topic with your team or peers that is relevant and timely to their situation.

For example, consider sending one of the three recommended ideas or tools below to your team with your comments or questions on how the idea or tool can be of value to your organization. By simply sharing the item, you can easily engage others in important conversations and activities relevant to your goals and priorities.

[Steps for setting up a presentation](#)

[Tips for organizing a presentation](#)

[Presentation outline worksheet](#)

To share an idea, tip, step, or tool with your comments via e-mail, select the EMAIL link in the upper right corner of the page that contains the idea, tip, step, or tool that you wish to share.

Discussion 1: Laying the foundation for a presentation

Presentations are a powerful way to communicate your message to a group. Depending on your purpose, a presentation can provide a forum for discussion of challenging ideas, help gain commitment and alignment to a course of action, or engage people in generating solutions to problems. But unless you take the time to define your presentation's objective, know your audience, and fully understand the context in which you are presenting, your presentation may not have the positive impact you intended.

You and your team can make substantial contributions to your unit or department when you skillfully lay the foundation for a successful presentation. Use these resources to lead a discussion with your

team about: (1) defining your presentation's objective; (2) knowing your audience; and (3) understanding your presentation's context.

Download resources:

[Discussion Invitation: Laying the Foundation for a Presentation](#)

[Discussion Guide: Laying the Foundation for a Presentation](#)

[Discussion Slides: Laying the Foundation for a Presentation \(optional\)](#)

[Tips for Preparing for and Leading the Discussion](#)

The discussion you have with your team will help individual team members understand and apply techniques that create the foundation for a successful presentation.

Working through the discussion guide can take up to 45 minutes. If you prefer a shorter 15- or 30-minute session, you may want to focus only on those concepts and activities most relevant to your situation.

Discussion 2: Organizing your presentation

Once you have established the foundation for your presentation, you need to create a clear and organized outline. A well-organized presentation makes the audience's listening job as easy as possible, boosting the likelihood that your presentation will produce the results you intended.

You and your team can make substantial contributions to your unit or department by improving your capacity to organize an effective presentation. Use these resources to lead a discussion with your team about how to develop three key sections of a presentation: the opening, the problem statement, and the solution.

Download resources:

[Discussion Invitation: Organizing your Presentation](#)

[Discussion Guide: Organizing your Presentation](#)

[Discussion Slides: Organizing your Presentation \(optional\)](#)

[Tips for Preparing for and Leading the Discussion](#)

The discussion you have with your team will help individual team members to understand and apply techniques for organizing an effective presentation.

Working through the discussion guide can take up to 45 minutes. If you prefer a shorter 15- or 30-minute session, you may want to focus only on those concepts and activities most relevant to your situation.

Start a Group Project

Just like any change effort, successfully incorporating new skills and behaviors into one's daily activities and habits takes time and effort. After reviewing or discussing the concepts in this topic, your direct reports will still need your support to fully apply new concepts and skills. They will need to overcome a variety of barriers including a lack of time, lack of confidence, and a fear of making mistakes. They will also need opportunities to hone their skills and break old habits. To help ensure their success, you can provide safe opportunities for individuals and your team as a whole to practice and experiment with new skills and behaviors on the job.

For example, to encourage the adoption of new norms, you can provide your team members with coaching, feedback, and additional time to complete tasks that require the use of new skills. Management approaches such as these will encourage team members to experiment with new skills until they become proficient.

Group learning projects provide another valuable technique for accelerating team members' development of new behaviors. A group learning project is an on-the-job activity aimed at providing team members with direct experience implementing their new knowledge and skills. Through a learning project, team members discover how new concepts work in the context of their situation, while simultaneously having a direct and tangible impact on the organization.

The documents below provide steps, tips, and a template for initiating a group learning project with your team, along with two project recommendations for this topic.

Download resources:

[Tips for Initiating and Supporting a Learning Project](#)

[Learning Project Plan Template](#)

[Learning Project: Evaluating a Presentation](#)

[Learning Project: Working as a Team to Prepare a Presentation](#)

How to Become an Authentic Speaker

Nick Morgan. "How to Become an Authentic Speaker." *Harvard Business Review*, November 2008.

[Download file](#)

Summary

Like the best-laid schemes of mice and men, the best-rehearsed speeches go oft astray. No amount of preparation can counter an audience's perception that the speaker is calculating or insincere. Why do so many managers have trouble communicating authenticity to their listeners? Morgan, a communications coach for more than two decades, offers advice for overcoming this difficulty. Recent brain research shows that natural, unstudied gestures—what Morgan calls the "second conversation"—express emotions or impulses a split second before our thought processes have turned them into words. So the timing of practiced gestures will always be subtly off—just enough to be picked up by listeners' unconscious ability to read body language. If you can't practice the unspoken part of your delivery, what can you do? Tap into four basic impulses underlying your speech—to be open to the audience, to connect with it, to be passionate, and to "listen" to how the audience is responding—and then rehearse your presentation with each in mind.

The Four Truths of the Storyteller

Peter Guber. "Four Truths of the Storyteller." *Harvard Business Review*, December 2007.

[Download file](#)

Summary

A well told story's power to captivate and inspire people has been recognized for thousands of years. Peter Guber is in the business of creating compelling stories: He has headed several entertainment companies—including Sony Pictures, PolyGram, and Columbia Pictures—and produced "Rain Man," "Batman," and "The Color Purple," among many other movies. In this article, he offers a method for effectively exercising that power. For a story to enrapture its listeners, says Guber, it must be true to the teller, embodying his or her deepest values and conveying them with candor; true to the audience, delivering on the promise that it will be worth people's time by acknowledging listeners' needs and involving them in the narrative; true to the moment, appropriately matching the context—whether it's an address to 2,000 customers or a chat with a colleague over drinks—yet flexible enough to allow for improvisation; and true to the mission, conveying the teller's passion for the worthy endeavor that the story illustrates and enlisting support for it.

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